

2009 -
2010

Mohave Community
College

Office of the Vice
President of Instruction
and Student Services

[MCC STUDENT SUCCESS INITIATIVES]

The intention of this report is to provide an overview of ongoing initiatives that lay the foundation for future improvements in student retention, completion, and transfer, at MCC. This report includes information on strategic planning at MCC, the upcoming Higher Learning Commission (HLC) accreditation visit, MCC management training, Title III grant activities, Learning Assistance Centers (LACs), financial aid and advising, the MCC Early Alert program, and articulation agreements and partnerships. Each of these areas plays an integral part in student success at MCC, and in the overall objective of marked improvement in student outcomes.

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Introduction

Over the past two years, Mohave Community College (MCC) has positioned itself to make vast improvements in the area of student success and completion. In March of 2010 the MCC Governing Board requested a preliminary data report on student success, and in April of 2010 the governing board agenda included the following report:

Description	06-07	07-08	08-09	Target	Benchmark
Average GPA	2.84	2.88	2.96	3.0	2.7
Overall Pass Rate	60.7%	56.1%	59.4%	65%	N/A
Degrees and Certificates - Total	587	731	721	N/A	N/A
Graduation Rate	9%	6%	7%	15%	11.5%
Percent Passing Board Certification Testing	88%	73%	77%	90%	TBD
Number of Students enrolled at an Arizona University with Transfer Hours from MCC	613	658	733	TBD	TBD
Fall to Fall Retention – New Students	48%	49%	42%	50%	53%
Graduating Student Satisfaction Rating	N/A	N/A	88%	100%	N/A

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Since the April governing board report, MCC has been working closely with its Institutional Information (II) department to produce a comprehensive yearly data report (see appendix one) to be presented to the governing board in the fall of each year. The development of this report has progressed nicely, and will be presented separately at the October 2010 governing board meeting, but will not be covered in detail in this report.

The intention of this report is to provide an overview of ongoing initiatives that lay the foundation for future improvements in student retention, completion, and transfer, at MCC. This report includes information on strategic planning at MCC, the upcoming Higher Learning Commission (HLC) accreditation visit, MCC management training, Title III grant activities, Learning Assistance Centers (LACs), financial aid and advising, the MCC Early Alert program, and articulation agreements and partnerships. Each of these areas plays an integral part in student success at MCC, and in the overall objective of marked improvement in student outcomes.

Strategic Planning at MCC

In the fall of 2008, MCC embarked on a strategic planning exercise that resulted in the MCC Strategic Plan 2010 – 2013 (see appendix two), which was approved by the governing board in January of 2010. This comprehensive plan is a culmination of thousands of hours of dedicated work by over 100 individuals consisting of students, faculty, staff, community stakeholders, and administrators. The overarching theme of the strategic plan is the creation and sustainability of a learning-centered college environment that places learning at the core of all we do. The plan is broken into four major content areas, Educational, Cultural, Civic, and Resources, and these major content areas are then broken down into 130 individual tasks.

The entire construct has the single laser-focus of creating a learning-centered college, where students and MCC employees are provided the necessary resources to ensure student success and completion, and to encourage a life of learning.

Accreditation and MCC Self-Study Plan

As a member of the Higher Learning Commission's (HLC) North Central Association (NCA) of Colleges and Schools, MCC is required to maintain its accreditation status through site visits and evaluations. MCC is due for its next site visit in the Fall 2012 – Spring 2013 evaluation cycle and is in the process of preparing objective evidence for the visit.

In the spring of 2009, MCC sent a three-person team to the HLC annual conference to begin building the self-study plan framework and to obtain information on the planning cycle and structure. The team made valuable contacts and adopted a usable structure for the MCC self-study plan (see appendix three).

In the spring of 2010, MCC sent a team of six to the HLC assessment workshop and a team of 12 to the HLC annual conference. These teams were exposed to valuable resources and contacts and brought back great ideas to share with the self-study planning committee for incorporation in the MCC self-study plan. Upon the team's return, MCC finalized the self-study plan and began the plan implementation cycle.

To further ensure alignment of the self-study plan, an MCC team cross-walked the MCC strategic plan with the HLC's five criteria for accreditation, and created a matrix that covers criterion one through five and their core components (see appendix four). The team has also

measured current practices against the commission's minimum expectations within the criteria for accreditation, and found that MCC complies with the stated expectations.

Accreditation and self-study play a fundamental role in guaranteeing the delivery of a quality education and in ensuring student success and completion.

MCC Management Training

Over the course of two days in July, MCC held its annual management training session. The focus of this year's event was the learning-centered college and how it impacts overall student success and outcomes. After the president's opening address, sessions were held on the curriculum process, instructional technology, student success in a learning-centered college, social media, ethics, counseling, employee development, and a strategic discussion on distance education. The overarching objective of the training was to bring the MCC management team into full alignment and integration with the college's initiatives on strategic planning, the learning-centered college, and the MCC self-study for accreditation.

These three major initiatives are tightly integrated with many overlapping aspects. Although each can be viewed as a standalone project, MCC's view is that the three are integrally woven in the fabric of student success, and in turn must be absolutely clear in each manager's mind to ensure the success of our students.

During the two days, many recommendations were made, and documented, on how to improve services to internal and external customers, how to improve operations, and how to positively impact student outcomes in terms of goal attainment and graduation. The college is now working through the recommendations and developing implementation plans. Several

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task forces have been formed and others will be formed in the near term to incorporate the work of the MCC management team training with ongoing college initiatives, focusing on positively impacting the student experience at MCC.

Title III Grant Activities

In the fall of 2008, MCC was awarded a two million dollar strengthening institutions grant to pilot programs designed to improve student outcomes. The Title III grant team and monies have played, and are playing, an instrumental part in improving student outcomes. To date, the grant has sponsored programs ranging from training events for associate faculty to recommendations for curriculum changes in transitional math and English. The grant also provided the money to fund computers for the new Learning Assistance Centers on the four MCC campuses.

During the summer months of 2010, two teams of MCC resident faculty from the math and English departments came together to analyze current MCC practices in transitional math and English. Each team worked diligently to make recommendations for curricular changes that will result in improved outcomes for MCC's remedial students. Two reports were created (see Appendices five and six) that provide proposed changes for the delivery of transitional math and English courses at MCC. Each is designed to increase student success and move students on to college credit courses in a reduced amount of time. The recommendations are currently under review by the MCC departmental clusters for possible submission to the MCC curriculum committee.

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Prior to the development of these two reports, Title III ran a MyMathLab pilot project for transitional math classes taught by both resident and associate faculty members. The pilot spanned the spring 2010 and summer 2010 semesters and was designed to compare outcomes for students utilizing the MyMathLab program to those who did not. Two hundred and fifty-nine students from sixteen sections of transitional math (TRM) took part in the pilot program. Compared to students in TRM classes not in the pilot study, students in the pilot study achieved at a higher rate, with five percent more passing and moving onto college level mathematics courses. The use of the MyMathLab program is one of the recommendations put forth in aforementioned math report.

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and the Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE) are instruments designed to give institutions a clear view of the student perspective on learning at an institution and on faculty perceptions about life in the classroom. In the spring of 2010, the Title III program sponsored both of these survey instruments at MCC. The CCSSE was conducted in 75 sections of select courses across all MCC campuses with an overall response rate of 100% participation. The average class size of the 75 sections was 16 students, for a total of 1200 surveys. The CCFSSE was sent to 249 resident and associate faculty members, with an overall response rate of 84%, or 210 respondents. The results from the CCSSE are now available from the sponsoring agency and are under review by the Title III director. The results of the CCFSSE will be released in October. An executive summary of the CCSSE results are presented in appendix seven, with a full report on CCSSE and CCFSSE due from the Title III director in late October.

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Associate faculty members deliver approximately 67% of all courses at community colleges and are a very important asset to the successful delivery of higher education. MCC is no different and utilizes associate faculty at a comparable rate. Most associate faculty members have full time day jobs and teach at night because they love to teach and want to make a little extra money, and because they want to give back to their community. Due to time and resource constraints it is extremely difficult to fully integrate associate faculty members into the day to day operations of the college. Finding time to train associate faculty members on college processes and procedures is challenging at best, leaving weekends as the only viable option for associate faculty work sessions.

In the spring and fall of 2010 the MCC Title III office sponsored two paid training days for associate faculty members to engage with resident faculty and staff on topics of major impact on student outcomes. In the spring time development event, Title III sponsored sessions on the learning-centered college concept. The sessions were facilitated by professional presenters from the Skip Downing On-Course organization. Three sessions were held across three Saturdays, one each in Bullhead City, Lake Havasu City, and Kingman. Members of the North Mohave campus traveled to Bullhead City to attend. These sessions were attended by 134 MCC employees and received high marks on the post session surveys. Of the 134 attendees, 106, or 79%, were associate faculty members. In the fall session, the Title III Counselor, in conjunction with the office of student services and the office of instruction, presented timely materials on the identification and management of at risk students. Over 100 attended the four sessions, hosted on the four MCC campuses, designed to provide tools

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for the early identification of students at risk, and intervention strategies to help these students succeed. Of the 106 attendees, 69, or 65%, were associate faculty members.

The surveys from both of these events were very positive, with over 80% of the attendees responding that the workshops were an overall success. Incorporation of associate faculty into mainstream college activities is critically important to the overall success of MCC students, and MCC is making positive strides in this area.

Student Orientation and Student Success Courses

As a part of its effort to increase student success, MCC has recently initiated a mandatory orientation program and two revised and expanded student success courses. The orientation program (ORT101) is a non-credit class that new students are required to complete before they can register for classes. The STU101 and STU103 classes are student success classes: STU101 is a 1-credit class and STU103 is a 3-credit class.

Mandatory orientation for new students was first piloted through the Title III subcommittee in the spring of 2009, and is now a college-wide requirement for all new students. These orientation sessions provide students with valuable information on college resources, as well as college policies and procedures. Once students complete their orientation course, they are immediately given the opportunity to register for classes in a structured and controlled setting hosted by student services personnel.

Prior to the implementation of the mandatory orientation program, orientation sessions were sparsely attended and of little value to students. Since its inception in the spring of 2009,

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2548 new and returning students have attended MCC orientation sessions. Orientation sessions are now seen as a vital retention tool at MCC.

Student success courses are designed to assist at risk students to achieve in the academic environment. MCC offers student success courses as a one credit class, STU 101, or a three credit class, STU 103. Advisors work directly with students on an individual basis to determine the needs of the student, and place them in these courses accordingly. The one credit course is a refresher course for students who have been away from school for a time and need to brush up on study skills, while the three credit course is an in-depth venture into the development of successful study habits and time management skills designed to produce success in the classroom. The three credit class is mainly geared toward high risk students, but is open to all students wishing to improve their skills.

With the onset of the mandatory orientation courses for new students, the MCC staff has focused heavily on moving more students into the STU 101 and STU 103 courses to improve retention and completion rates. In 2007-2008, only 75 students took a STU course. In 2008-2009, with the increased emphasis on completion and retention, the STU enrollment increased to 163 students, and in 2009-2010, the number of students attending STU courses increased dramatically to 1070 students. The overall intent of the staff is to utilize these courses as a catalyst to increase student retention and completion.

Learning Assistance Centers

Learning Assistance Centers (LACs) play a pivotal role in providing students with the necessary support resources to achieve academic success. LACs generally provide tutoring,

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supplemental instruction, math labs, reading labs, and writing labs, along with software and text book resources for students outside of classroom time.

This fall, the college opened four LACs, one on each of the four MCC campuses. The centers are the fruit of the Title III grant and MCC's focus on student success. MCC provided the needed space, renovation and upgrade resources, along with the furniture, carpet, and paint, to properly outfit a Student Learning Commons (SLC) on each campus. With the approval of the Department of Education, the overseer of the Title III grant, the college utilized Title III grant funding to outfit each of the LACs with laptop computing resources and a mobile/securable charging station. The Title III tutor coordinator oversees the operation of the LACs and provides tutoring resources, which are supplemented by the college work study program.

The SLC is a combination of a Student Learning Lounge (SLL), Computer Classrooms (CC), and a Learning Assistance Center (LAC), designed to provide students with a learning centered environment for academic debate, casual studying, group interaction, and formal academic support resources such as supplemental instruction and tutoring. The lounge area includes ample seating, power outlets for student computing resources, and high-speed wireless internet connectivity. The LAC consists of areas for reading, writing, and math labs, and loaner laptops for use inside the LAC.

Research shows that students who regularly visit their local LAC achieve nearly a one point advantage in grade point average, and are much more likely to persist to graduation. The

SLC concept is seen as another positive force on the MCC campuses and a major asset to improved student success. MCC is currently in the process of ensuring that all students are aware of this new resource, and will provide metrics on usage and success in the spring. The fall 2010 class of new students will serve as the baseline for future longitudinal cohort analysis.

Early Alert – Early Intervention

Early alert is a program designed to identify students who are not likely to succeed at the earliest possible point in a semester. Instructors look for known signs, such as non-attendance, lack of focus, late assignments, poor quiz results, and erratic behavior, to set the process in motion. Once an instructor identifies any of the many early signs of a student at risk, the instructor flags the student and notifies the student services department to initiate the early intervention process. Intervention can range from a simple phone call to intense tutoring services.

MCC has had an early alert program in place for many years, but in the past it has focused mainly on the alert function, and not so much on the intervention function. Part of the problem with the past system was its heavy reliance on manual data entry and massive amounts of paper.

Over the summer a task force was formed to review MCC early alert processes, and logistics associated with the program. The task force recommended a move to an automated system, first, to make it easier for faculty to participate, and second, to move MCC away from paper forms in alignment with the MCC green movement. The new process, implemented this fall,

simply requires faculty members to make a single EX web entry into the college's administrative system (EX). Student services directors can then pull the information from EX, send letters to students, or call them to discuss possible resources that can assist them with their course work.

The task force re-titled the retooled system from Early Alert to Early Alert – Early Intervention, to emphasize the need to follow through with each student after at-risk identification. The new process has been presented and trained in student services director meetings, title III professional development/training events, and in MCC management meetings. Training will continue throughout the year to ensure college-wide adoption.

MCC has many resources available for students to help them improve performance. The college provides supplemental instruction, tutoring, math, reading, and writing labs, faculty one-on-one time, advising, and counseling services. Each service is available upon the request of any student in need. Although the early alert – early intervention program is designed to identify at risk students and proactively initiate these services, they are available to all MCC students as a part of the college's overarching student success initiative.

Improvements in Financial Aid and Advising

Approximately 26-27% of new students receive financial aid (FA), while 40-50% of returning students receive aid. As the disbursement of financial aid continues to grow at MCC, staff emphasis on financial aid literacy and financial literacy to help students understand the impact of over-borrowing has become increasingly acute. Financial aid employees, as well as staff across the college are putting a major emphasis on the proper load

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size and its relationship to academic success. The process to calculate Satisfactory Academic Performance (SAP) has been streamlined and automated to ensure students are progressing toward graduation and adhering to the Title IV rules that govern the distribution of federal financial aid.

SAP is measured quantitatively and qualitatively to ensure academic progress in terms of grade point average and completion of courses. The FA department calculates SAP at the end of each semester to ensure student eligibility to receive aid. If a student fails to make qualitative or quantitative progress, their FA is put on hold until an appeal is granted. If an appeal is granted, the student is allowed to enroll for the next semester with FA, but the student must show satisfactory progress. If a student appeal is denied, the student is no longer eligible for FA, but may attend at a reduced load, by paying for their classes without federal funding. The reduction in load is designed to help the student succeed.

Loan default has become a major problem for students across America. Given the steady rise in default rates over the last ten years; MCC has developed a detailed default management plan (see appendix eight) to assist students in borrowing correctly to attend college.

Improvements in FA literacy, SAP, and default management, are all a part of the FA awareness plan at MCC, designed to help students succeed in the learning-centered college. To further support this program, student services and instructional personnel were provided training on May 14, and the financial aid section of the new student orientation course has been greatly expanded. Success in the classroom is important, but success outside the

classroom in areas such as FA and financial literacy also play a major role in the overall success of students.

Advising students is an area of high impact for students and staff, and it plays a pivotal role in the success and retention of students. MCC is always striving for improvements in this area, and this year is no different. Many recommendations were made to improve advising during the management training sessions, ranging from expanding the number of advisors, to assigning every fulltime employee of the college an advising load of at least ten students. These recommendations and others are currently under review.

In the meantime, a new advising handbook has been created for immediate use (see appendix nine), and advising cross-training sessions were conducted for faculty and staff in August, with additional sessions scheduled for MCC's December training days. MCC has also created a student resource guide (see appendix ten) to assist students in search of agency support outside the college.

Articulation and Partnerships

One of the main goals of the college is to build partnerships within the local and state community to ensure student and community success. Over the past two years the college has been active in successfully building strong partnerships with the county, state universities, local school districts, public safety entities, and our rural communities. These relationships are critical to the ongoing success of the institution and its students.

This topic was heavily covered in the college's yearly report to the Governing Board (see appendix eleven), so it will not be repeated here. Suffice it to say that MCC continues to grow in this area and will continue to do so in the future. Growing the MCC articulation and partnership base is extremely important to the continued growth and success of MCC students.

Distance Education Study

It is widely held in the higher education industry that failure rates are higher for students who take online courses. With this information and improved student outcomes in mind, MCC thoroughly studied and analyzed its online offerings in the summer of 2010. The resulting document, "A Study of Distance Education Student Success: 2006-2010 (see appendix twelve), concluded that there is no correlation between online courses and increased student failure rates. MCC students who take an online course are just as likely to pass as a student who takes the course on ground or in a hybrid format.

Although this study provided no catalyst for immediate action, it provided MCC with important information relative to the quality of online delivery and student success. MCC will continue to monitor student outcomes in DE and on-ground to ensure the integrity of course delivery in all modalities, and to ensure improvements in student outcomes.

Conclusions

Over the past 24 months, MCC has made a concerted effort to improve student success across the college, but much work is still needed to reach satisfactory levels of retention and completion. Given the early stages of the life cycle for some of the programs and recent

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changes to existing programs, their success will not be known for some time, but MCC is collecting baseline data for later cohort statistical analysis.

This report, along with the complementary, first generation, comprehensive yearly data report that accompanies it, set the stage for MCC to take a leadership role in ensuring continuous improvements in student success and outcomes. Together, the two lay the foundation for MCC to be one of the first community colleges in the nation to adopt the National Governors Association's common college completion metrics, which establishes core measures for completion, attainment, and productivity.

As documented in the report, there are many student success initiatives under way at MCC, and many left to implement. With that said MCC is poised and ready to do whatever it takes to ensure long term improvements in student outcomes.

Appendices – Distributed to Governing Board Members in CD Format

Appendix One - Enrollment Management Data Report- Final 09172010

Appendix Two - Strategic Plan 2010

Appendix Three - Mohave Community College Self-Study Plan 2009-2012 final

Appendix Four – HLC Criteria for Accreditation and MCC Strategic Plan Crosswalk Matrix

Appendix Five - Math Curriculum Development Report

Appendix Six - Transitional English revisions Final

Appendix Seven - CCSSE Executive Summary - Fall 2010

Appendix Eight - MCC Default Management Plan

Appendix Nine - MCC Advising Handbook 2010-2011

Appendix Ten - MCC Community Resource Guide 2010-2011

Appendix Eleven - VPI&SS Annual Report 2009-2010

Appendix Twelve - A Study of Distance Education Student Success 2006-2010

Appendix Thirteen - Enrollment Management Data Report Talking Points 2010

Appendix Fourteen – MCC Student Success Initiatives Fall 2010